

Column: A Response to Bruce Nelson's "The Big Chill"



Reading Bruce Nelson's deeply evocative column, I am sure those of us of a certain age were awash with nostalgia, especially those who grew up in a small town. Though my childhood was spent in New Jersey, I wonder if my memories of small-town life gently prodded me to spend my later years in Easton.

As the product of a conservative, and by most standards tiny girls' school—35 or so in my class, I remember wanting to rebel and cross the Maginot line over to our brother school where gangly, hands-in-pockets, MGB driving boys might share flasks with us and whisper what are now unacceptable comments about our appearance.

Every morning, we lined up for chapel and were inspected to make sure we were in correct uniform, no dangling earrings, messy hair or excessive lipstick. If Miss Hanson disapproved, we were marked late and sent to the back of the line to "fix ourselves." I spent many mornings fixing.

The summer before my high school freshman year, I flew to Paris on TWA as part of a student exchange program. I wore a skirted suit, low heel pumps and white gloves. In those days, we wore clothing that showed our respect and gratitude for the privilege of flying and appropriately represented our country when we landed.

Our graduation in 1965 was held at the First Presbyterian Church. We wore matching white linen dresses and carried a daisy chain up the center aisle to receive our diplomas. Outside we hugged and cried and vowed to stay close wherever the fates took us. And some of us did.

What looks provincial today, almost embarrassingly so, was foundational to the way I see the world, despite having spent my entire professional life in Manhattan. Living in high-rise apartments, I did not know most neighbors. The standard protocol on the elevator was a tight nod. Early in my career a well-meaning colleague told me to quit wearing my hair in a ponytail and to ditch the plaid skirts. “Who are you, Heidi?” She asked acidly.

Well, yes. I am. But without the Alps.

As a deeply entrenched Eastonite now, I walk four miles everyday with my good friend and neighbor, Bill. En route we feed treats to Dave Barney’s donkey, Henry. Our walks are punctuated by gasps of wonder at nature’s sounds and sights. I share my fears and triumphs in my ongoing battles with cancer and aging with my dear pal, Lea, whom I must have known or been related to in a former life. When I walk our dog past Verne’s house, I know I’ll have a big chat fest about all things Easton. Yes, we have fine elected officials, but Verne is the mayor of Sherwood Road.

Everyone on our street knows the drill during a power failure; who has a generator, who has a power outlet on the front porch for phone charging, who has a chain saw. Who are the best drivers in a snowstorm, who has a plow, who knows what’s open in Monroe for coffee? We all know every dog by name and when any get loose, we know where to return them.

My friends come from vastly different backgrounds but Easton has bonded us. Our water is safe for drinking, our air is good for breathing, our farms provide for us. All in all, this is a fine place to live, made even better by Bruce Nelson.

The Courier would love to hear about readers' childhood remembrances and experiences moving to and living in Easton. Please send them to eastoncourierct@gmail.com or [submit online here](#).